

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

UNITED STATES SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

by

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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ABSTRACT

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Responding to emerging new threats and the changing security environment around the world, U.S. strategic leaders and planners are reconsidering the U.S. defense strategy for the Asia-Pacific. Developing a new strategy to adapt to the conditions of a new era will be a challenge. The conflict between North and South Korea remains the principal threat to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. This SRP reviews the security concerns in the region that threaten the interests of the U.S. and its allies. The U.S. recognizes the critical role that bilateral agreements play in securing peace and stability in the region. These agreements have long served as the cornerstone of the regional security structure that exists. But it's clear that existing agreements need to be reviewed and updated. This paper examines these defense agreements and the need to strengthen these commitments to support the global war on terrorism and to counter future threats. As the U.S. shifts military assets and potentially downsizes its forces in the region, access agreements become increasingly important. This paper addresses current access agreements and the need to gain more access to key host nation facilities, ports, and airfields to support future operational requirements. Forward military presence is crucial to security and maintaining stability in the region. Finally, this paper will make recommendations for force restructuring that will enable the U.S. to meet commitments and protect its interests in the region.

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UNITED STATES SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

The United States has vital national interests throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including the security of South Korea and other key regional partners and ensuring the access to major air and sea lanes connecting Asia with Europe and the Mediterranean. In support of these interests, U.S. military forces are actively working with regional partners to construct a more stable international environment in the region. Since the end of the Vietnam War, the United States, together with its regional partners, have developed an Asia-Pacific regional security architecture composed of the following main elements: forward U.S. military presence; prepositioned military equipment and access to host nation facilities; regional partnerships that boost host nation defense capabilities and U.S. coalition interoperability through foreign military sales and training; and regional engagement through joint military exercises.¹

After the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Pentagon undertook extensive reviews of U.S. military strategy and doctrine. In response to the Soviet collapse, the U.S. military underwent a massive downsizing (see table 1)². For example, the number of troops on active duty declined by more than one-third. All aspects of U.S. defense were examined. This assessment prompted the Pentagon to develop a plan to modernize weapon systems and restructure the military into a leaner, more mobile force capable of responding to a number of crises in different parts of the world.³ This plan has evolved with each operation involving American military forces since the end of the Cold War, such as the 1991 Persian Gulf War against Iraq, small scale contingencies in Somalia and Haiti, the NATO campaign in Kosovo, numerous peacekeeping operations, and more recently the global war on terrorism.⁴ Indeed the global war on terrorism has accelerated the pace of military reform.

	1989	1999
Active-duty military personnel	2.2 million	1.4 million
Military Bases	495	398
Strategic Nuclear Warheads	10,563	7958
ARMY:		
Main Battle Tanks	15600	7836
Armored Personnel Carriers	27400	17800
NAVY:		
Strategic Submarines	36	18
Tactical Submarines	99	66
AIR FORCE:		
Tactical Fighter Squadrons	41	52
Long-range Combat Aircraft	393	206

TABLE 1. AMERICA'S DOWNSIZED DEFENSES: 1989 VS. 1999

Modernization and restructuring our military forces were the major post-Cold War initiatives of U.S. military strategy. However, our military strategy needs to expand beyond the current boundaries of force structure and modernization; it must now address other important issues in order to develop a comprehensive national defense strategy that includes mutual defense treaties, access agreements, and security cooperation programs.

Department of Defense (DOD) strategists are currently exploring ways to downsize and reconfigure our overall military strength while retaining a modest forward-deployed presence in the Asia-Pacific. In “New Battle Stations,” Kurt Campbell and Celeste Johnson report that, “Changes being considered include moving forces away from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in South Korea and shifting large numbers of forces out of Germany. American defense planners want to create a global network of bare-boned facilities that could be expanded to meet crises as they arise.¹⁵ They also observed that U.S. military forces overseas reflect the post-Cold War strategic situation and do not address the nation’s evolving security challenges. The Pentagon planners are seeking ways to diversify overseas presence by building into the national defense strategy and force structure the flexibility to move forces from one combatant command to another. This paper argues that updating the mutual defense treaties and increasing access to key host nation infrastructure will allow the U.S. to reduce its military presence while and continuing to foster stability and regional security.

This paper will examine the current U.S. security strategy and force structure in the Asia-Pacific region in light of the global war on terrorism, showing how a comprehensive strategy that strongly emphasizes enhanced mutual defense treaties and additional access agreements can support and protect U.S. interests in the region, which include:

- Ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action
 - U.S. sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom
 - Safety of U.S. citizens at home and abroad
 - Protection of critical U.S. infrastructure
- Honoring international commitments
 - Security and well-being of allies and friends
 - Precluding hostile domination in critical areas
 - Peace and stability in the Western Hemisphere
- Contributing to economic well-being
 - Vitality and productivity of the global economy
 - Security of international sea, space, and information LOCs
 - Access to key markets and strategic resources

- Preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the systems for delivering them.⁶

ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY CONCERNS

To structure an appropriate force to protect U.S. national interests and implement the national strategy military planners must first evaluate the threat. The end of the Cold War has prompted strategic planners to redefine security in the region. In addition to the traditional conventional military threats posed by North Korea, China and Russia, the threat has expanded to include non-conventional threats, more commonly known as the transnational threats. Such threats include proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, drug trafficking, illegal migration, human trafficking and terrorism.

A number of threats have been projected to be of particular concern to Asia-Pacific security in the coming years. During a House International Relations Subcommittee hearing on U.S. Security Policy in Asia, Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, Commander United States Pacific Command (CDRUSPACOM), provided a brief summary of the primary security concerns in the region:

USPACOM's theater security concerns include conflict on the Korean Peninsula (where although the likelihood of war is low, the stakes are high); miscalculation in places such as Kashmir or the Taiwan Strait; transnational threats such as terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug-associated violence; and instability from failed nation states. Although we anticipate peaceful resolution of longstanding security concerns in places like the Korean Peninsula, Kashmir, and the Taiwan Strait, the strategic situation in these potential flashpoints and elsewhere mandates vigilance and preparedness. We are strengthening our current security relationships and military capabilities while developing new relationships and capabilities to deter conflict and dissuade would-be regional competitors. These security concerns are accordingly addressed in the U.S. national military strategy, with supporting guidance.⁷

One of the region's primary concerns is the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The conflict between North and South Korea remains the principal conventional threat to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Though tensions have eased recently, the North Koreans remain unpredictable. The North Korean's maintain a formidable conventional force. Their army is the fifth largest in the world, consisting of 1.2 million soldiers, 10,000 artillery pieces and over 800 missiles capable of reaching South Korea. In addition, North Korea has the disposition and capability to export technology from its nuclear weapons program. Indeed, they

intimated a willingness to market weapons of mass destruction in the future to rogue states or Islamic extremists.⁸

Escalation in tension between India and Pakistan remains a major concern. The potential for miscalculation of this conflict remains high. India and Pakistan have engaged in numerous conflicts during the last half century. Since 1989, the two countries have clashed over the disputed states of Jammu and Kashmir. Nuclear tests by both countries in 1998 increased the risk that WMD will be used in future conflicts.⁹ Although the U.S. anticipates peaceful resolution of this longstanding dispute, the strategic situation mandates USPACOM be prepared in the event the conflict escalates.

The tensions between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan represent another potential source of conflict in the region. China has one of the largest militaries in the world and has threatened to take military action if Taiwan declares independence. Indeed China's modernization program may include preparations for conflict with Taiwan.¹⁰ The current U.S. administration's policy is to use whatever means necessary to defend Taiwan against a military attack by China.

Terrorism has been growing in the Asia-Pacific region and now poses a major security concern. Unlike the Middle East, there are no state-sponsored terrorist groups in the Asia-Pacific. "However, the terrorist cells that do exist provide unique challenges to United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) and to the countries in which they proliferate". Much of the region's terrorist activity is related to separatist activities in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Many of these indigenous terrorist groups are also linked to international Islamic extremists.¹¹ The terrorist groups that pose the most dangerous threats to U.S. and its allies in the region are the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) operating in the Philippines and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network, the largest and most lethal terrorist group in the region. Both of these terrorist groups have links to al Qaeda.

Finally, source of a low-level potential conflict resides in the dispute over the Spratly Islands. The Peoples Republic of China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam all lay claim to all or some of the islands and surrounding waters. The islands are important for strategic and economic reasons. They lie within the principal sea lines of communication that link the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This dispute is not likely to be resolved in the near future. To address the conventional and relatively new and unconventional threats to U.S. and regional security interests, application of all elements of national power is required. However, continuation of U.S. overseas presence and active engagement remain central to this effort.

POST-COLD WAR REVIEW OF U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION

U.S. military forces in the region are actively engaged in the defense of vital U.S. interests and supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Operations Iraqi Freedom. More generally, these forces help preserve regional stability by deterring aggression and by providing a credible threat of force if deterrence fails. U.S. forward presence mitigates the impact of historical regional tensions and allows the United States to anticipate problems, manage potential threats, and encourage peaceful resolution of disputes.

On any given day in the USPACOM area of responsibility, there are about 300,000 U.S. troops, of which approximately 100,000 troops are forward deployed. Of that 100,000, about 37,000 personnel are stationed in the Republic of Korea (ROK) and 47,000 in Japan. In addition 21,000 are deployed on Navy ships in the region. The Army provides two divisions to support USPACOM, one division in the ROK and one division in Hawaii. The Navy's 7th Fleet is responsible for the West Pacific and Indian Ocean and the 3rd Fleet is responsible for East Pacific and the Bering Sea. The Pacific Fleet consists of 120 ships based in Hawaii, Japan, Guam, and Diego Garcia. The Marine Corps also provides two Marine Expeditionary Forces, one in Japan and the other on the continental United States. Likewise, 7th United States Air Force (USAF) is stationed in the ROK, the 5th USAF in Japan, and the 11th USAF in Alaska. The remaining forces supporting USPACOM are stationed in the continental United States.¹²

Developing a military strategy and force structure to counter both the non-conventional and conventional threats is crucial to security and maintaining stability in the region. There are 43 countries in the USPACOM area of responsibility - three of the most populous countries (China, India, Indonesia), and five of the world's largest arm forces (China, India, North Korea, South Korea, Russia). During the past several years there has been much discussion and continued debate on where and how U.S. armed forces should be structured overseas. The future U.S. military posture and presence cannot be properly assessed without examining the history and missions of the current military forces in the region.

The first post-Cold War review of the U.S. Asia-Pacific force postures came quickly in 1991. The strategy the U.S. adopted under the Bush administration was known as the "Base Force".¹³ This strategy emphasized downsizing and reconfiguring the overall military strength while retaining a forward presence close to potentially unstable areas in the region. The strategy also called for a phased U.S. troop reduction of 32,000 personnel and associated equipment between 1990-1995 (see table 2).¹⁴ When President Clinton took office in 1992, a slightly different strategy emerged. To revive a slumping economy, President Clinton decided

to decrease defense spending and use the additional funds to strengthen the U.S. economy. President Clinton's change in strategy resulted in further troop reductions.¹⁵

Country Service	1990 Starting Strength	Phase I Reductions 1990-1992	Philippines Withdrawal	1993 Strength	Phase II Reductions 1992-1995	1995 Strength
JAPAN	50,000	4,773		45,227	700	44,557
Army	2,000	22		1,978		1,978
Navy	7,000	502		6,498		
Marines	25,000	3,489		21,511		21,511
Air Force	16,000	560		15,440	700	14,740
KOREA	44,400	6,987		37,413	6,500	30,913
Army	3,200	5,000		27,000		
Navy (Shore-based)	400			400		
Marines	500			500		
Air Force	11,500	1,987		9513	9513	
PHILIPPINES	14,800	3,490	11,310			
Army	200		200			
Navy	5,000	672	4,328			
Marines	900		900			
Air Force	8,700	2,818	5,882			
Subtotal	109,200	15,250	11,310	83,640	7,200	76,440
Afloat	25,800			25,800		25,800
Total	135,000			109,440		102,240

TABLE 2. PHASED US TROOP REDUCTIONS

Today, building on existing bilateral and multilateral agreements and pursuing more Acquisition and Cross-Serving Agreements (ACSAs) can allow the U.S. to reduce the number

of forward-deployed troops in the region with a minimal degree of risk and still accomplish its strategic objectives. These strategic objectives include: deterring aggression and maintaining stability; securing uninterrupted sea lines of communication and continued access to the region's expanding markets; retaining U.S. influence through dialogue; and supporting democracy.

DEFENSE SECURITY COMMITMENTS

The U.S. recognizes the critical role that bilateral agreements play in securing peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. In the region, security and stability have been supported by long-standing mutual defense agreements. These agreements have long served as the cornerstone of the regional security structure that exists. These formal relationships enhance the U.S. ability to respond to short warning crises or to conduct possible contingency operations. But it's time to review and strengthen these commitments to support the global war on terrorism and to counter future threats. Five of the seven U.S. mutual defense treaties are with countries in this region:

U.S. – Republic of Korea (1953, Mutual Defense Treaty) Through this treaty, the United States is committed to maintaining regional peace and security and to assist the Republic of Korea (ROK) in defending itself from outside threats. This Mutual Defense Treaty allows the U.S. to maintain a military force on the Korean Peninsula to deter another war. It also serves to facilitate security agreements between the ROK and U.S. militaries.¹⁶

U.S. – Japan (1960, Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty) The U.S. – Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security remains the cornerstone for promoting peace and stability in the region. This treaty authorized U.S. military presence in Japan for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the surrounding areas. This treaty assures Japan's support to U.S. presence in the region; Japan's cooperation to support the U.S. security role in the region; U.S. assistance in the training of Japanese Self-Defense Forces; sharing of intelligence; research and development; joint training; and measures for more cooperation in the event of a crisis.¹⁷

U.S. – Philippines (1951, Mutual Defense Treaty) This one-page treaty simply states that the U.S. will assist the Philippines in case of an armed attack.¹⁸ There are currently some ongoing issues (which will be discussed later) with this security agreement that impact the global war on terrorism.

U.S. – Thailand (1955, Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty) This treaty provides that, in the event of an armed attack, each member will act to meet the common

danger, in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. In addition to this agreement, the U.S. and Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding in 1971 affirming continued cooperation. This is the only agreement of the five that does not need significant updating.

U.S. – New Zealand – Australia (ANZUS,1951) Under the ANZUS agreement, any attack against New Zealand, Australia, or U.S. forces could trigger military assistance from the others. This treaty remains in force with respect to the Australia-U.S. alliance. However, in 1986 the U.S. withdrew from its security obligations to New Zealand because New Zealand refused to allow nuclear capable U.S. Navy ships port access. New Zealand is currently reviewing its security relationship with the U.S. and plans to release the results in May 2004. Part of the review is a consideration of whether they should rethink its ban on nuclear power ships visiting the country. According to Frank Donnini, "some observers believe the ANZUS Treaty reflects Western thoughts of a generation ago and has outgrown its original usefulness."¹⁹ The ANZUS Treaty forms the foundation for a strong security relationship between the U.S. and Australia. The Alliance provides a structure that facilitates regular cross-training, the exchange of officers annually, large-scale exercises such as Tandem Thrust, and allows Australian forces to operate alongside U.S. forces in a variety of combat and non-combat operations.

Even though the U.S. has included the ASG on its list of terrorist groups with links to Al Qaeda, the Mutual Defense Treaty and Philippine constitution prevents the U.S. from engaging in combat operations on Philippine soil.²⁰ In spite of this, the U.S. forces will continue to play an important role in training, advising, and assisting the Armed Forces Philippines in their fight against the ASG. While changes to the Mutual Defense agreement are highly unlikely anytime soon, a Mutual Logistic Support Agreement is the mechanism for securing agreements with the RP for use of its ports and airfields as a staging area in the war against international terrorism.

Some countries have taken steps to update the framework and details of older agreements to reflect the new security environment. For example, in April 1996 President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto issued the U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security, which affirmed the continued and growing importance of our alliance to the security of both nations and to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region. This declaration set guidelines for reviewing and updating the alliance in order to enhance bilateral defense cooperation. This declaration could provide a model for other nations in the region to update their defense relationship and security commitments with the U.S. It can also serve as a foundation for

building new regional security arrangements with other nations in the region where no security agreements exist.

These mutual defense treaties need to be more flexible to support the global war on terrorism and to counter future threats. When these agreements were forged, the enemy was clearly identified and external threats were easy to define. Today, the sources of threats have movements with regional as well as global links. Addressing these new threats while maintaining our long-standing traditional security agreements will present a genuine diplomatic and security challenge. Agreements and alliances are important; they essentially under gird security structure in the region. U.S. alliances will continue to serve as the cornerstone for security and stability in the region. As such they must be reviewed and updated to remain effective.

GAINING MORE ACCESS

As the U.S. shifts military assets and plans to downsize its forces in the region, access agreements become increasingly important – indeed they are a critical component of U.S. deterrent and rapid response strategies. Access to key host nation facilities, ports and airfields in countries such as Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and Australia is key to achieving our national security objectives in the Asia-Pacific. In addition to maintaining agreements with these countries, USPACOM must seek out more access opportunities with other countries that are close to potential hot spots. This will allow the U.S. to make use of host nation resources to support day-to-day and future operational requirements.²¹

Mutual Logistics Support Agreements (MLSA) or Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreements (ACSA) formally establish terms and conditions for exchange of logistics support for joint training and exercises, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian and disaster relief operations and contingency operations. As United States reduce its forces in the region, ally support will become increasingly important. Negotiating more ACSAs with host nations can enhance operational readiness and reduce the logistics tail. In addition, ACSAs allow visiting military forces to receive logistics support in the form of supplies; petroleum; transportation; base operations support; use of repair and maintenance facilities; and access to airfields and ports.

In addition to host nation supplies and services, Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreements can give the U.S. access to basing and infrastructure necessary for force projection in and through the USPACOM area of responsibility. In 1992 U.S. bases, ports and facilities were

closed in the Philippines. Shortly thereafter an ACSA was signed with Singapore to use their ship maintenance and repair facilities, bases and airfields. American forces continue to make use of Singapore's airfields and ports, thereby ensuring a continued military presence in the region.²² Singapore has continued its engagement effort by offering access to its new pier facility located at Changi Naval Station. This pier can accommodate an aircraft carrier; this access represents Singapore's strong commitment for maintaining a close relationship into the future.²³ Again ACSAs proved critical during Desert Storm/Desert Shield when a significant percentage of strategic airlift, combat aircraft and naval vessels were staged from or through USPACOM's area of responsibility in support of operations. Arrangements of this nature continue to prove critical as countries in the USPACOM area of responsibility currently provide access in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. More such agreements with others in the region should be pursued; such agreements are an important and permanent feature of the regional security structure.

Offering countries money so that they can upgrade infrastructure, bases and airfields is one method of establishing and maintaining access to bases and other critical assets. In the past United States has invested substantially to improve the infrastructure in Japan and Korea. These investments demonstrate commitment to mutual security interests and ensure that host nation infrastructure meets our operational requirements. The U.S. must invest money and demonstrate the same level of commitment in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia. Investing in these countries to ensure access to key infrastructure nodes will expand our global reach to regions of potential conflict.

Indeed America accepts some risk in not having pre-negotiated access agreements in place. The importance of having a signed agreement in position prior to conducting military operations abroad cannot be overstated. Planning operations on the basis of assumptions is very risky. Without agreements, the U.S. cannot assume it has unlimited access to foreign assets. Limitations imposed by allies can affect military operations. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, for example, Turkey refused to grant permission to use bases and airfields to support military operations or even for transit of U.S. forces. The United States, on occasion, has had difficulty securing overflight rights for a number of contingency operations. For example, the Philippines refused to allow B52s to fly from their bases during the Vietnam War due to Filipino sensitivities, and Thailand restricted the use of bases in support of the Mayaguez rescue.²⁴ The U.S. was able to overcome these limitations and accomplish the mission. But this may not always be the case.

U.S. FORWARD PRESENCE

Forward presence relies on the synergistic effect of combining naval, ground, air, and special operations forces in the region, to include prepositioned equipment and military construction to support rapid introduction of additional forces should the need arise. Forward presence in concert with exercises and security assistance implements the overseas presence portion of the USPACOM theater strategy.

Although the strategic landscape has changed dramatically in the past 15 years, some would argue that the core reasons for a U.S. military presence in the region have remained constant. And the best military option for regional stability and deterring aggression in today's security environment is to maintain the current level of overseas presence. Our current force structure reflects our regional strategic requirements prior to 9/11 and the capabilities necessary to support them. Some analysts contend that current force structure and forward presence should remain essentially the same. They point out that the approximately 100,000 U.S. military personnel in the region represent a forward presence capable of deterring conflict and, if necessary, of swiftly responding to and defeating any threats in the region.²⁵

Our rapid response strategy is probably the most compelling reason for maintaining the current level of U.S. presence in the region. The foreboding expanse of this region significantly limits our ability to respond to short warning crises. Therefore, forces on the ground must be located within reasonable proximity of potential conflicts.

The reduction of U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific could have significant impact on local economies and potentially create political vacuums. Many countries economies have benefited from the presence of U.S. forces in the region. Foreign investors are more willing to invest more money in countries where U.S. troops are present. The United States contributes millions of dollars to local economies where U.S. troops are based. American troop reductions could potentially create a vacuum to be filled by China. "Japan has historical, cultural, and constitutional constraints; India is in the wrong location; and Indonesia has enough internal problems to keep it occupied, which takes all three out of the running. China is geographically central in Asia and their economic and military powers are on the rise."²⁶

THE ARGUMENT FOR INCREASED FORWARD PRESENCE

There are also compelling arguments to increase U.S. forward presence in the region, especially in view of the global war on terrorism and the other missions the military may be required to perform, usually referred to as military operations other war. Many believe that the global war on terrorism, U.S. commitments to non-combat roles (peace operations, relief

operations and NEO) and our commitment to the mutual defense agreements are good reasons for expanding U.S. military presence and capabilities in the Asia-Pacific. U.S. forward deployed forces serve as a stabilizing influence and demonstrate our firm determination to defend U.S. and allied interests in the region.²⁷

Despite such rationale, maintaining our current force structure in Asia will be a challenge. There are certain risks associated with maintaining the status quo. Much depends on how the People's Republic of China (PRC) and North Korea view U.S. action – as well as how host nations perceive the impact of U.S. presence to their relations with other regional neighbors. Hosting U.S. combat forces may make that country a target of the PRC and other transnational or similar threats.

While most governments support U.S. presence, there have been occasions when the general public has demonstrated strong opposition. Indeed recent protests by the general public in the Republic of South Korea and the Philippines oppose ongoing U.S. military presence. Lack of regular support could cause regional politicians to rethink their position with regards to basing of U.S. forces on their soil. ²⁸

ALTERNATIVES TO FORWARD PRESENCE

The hard truth is that the U.S. must seriously consider reducing its forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region. Today's security environment presents radically different challenges; crises are now likely to occur where U.S. forces have rarely operated. For most of our history our adversaries have been clearly identified, and theaters of operations were defended with permanently stationed forces. The establishment of forward operating locations (FOLs) or a network of small bases in countries such as Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia where the U.S. has never had a substantial military presence can compensate for a potential reduction in U.S. military presence in the region. FOLs are not full-scale bases rather they are built on existing airfields and host nation infrastructure. They should be minimally staffed bases that could be expanded to meet eventual crises. FOLs should house military equipment and supplies that would be needed to accommodate follow on forces. This would be similar to our operations in Japan and Korea, only on a smaller scale. These smaller FOLs or bases would be linked to larger bases (such as Misawa and Yokosuka in Japan) for intermediate support. FOLs would be augmented and supported from forward support locations situated throughout the theater. To support the Southeast Asia region, we may have consider establishing a larger FOL in Australia.²⁹

The U.S. military must transform into a more expeditionary force that can quickly project sizeable forces overseas to unpredictable locations and then sustain them. We must enhance our power projection capability. We must create a robust capability to swiftly and easily move into the FOL that offers the best tactical and strategic advantage. That means we must continue to invest in strategic air and sea lift. Both are critical in getting our forces to the theater in a timely manner. Pre-positioning of equipment and supplies is also critical to our ability to project power.³⁰

CONCLUSION

The continuing uncertainty in the region means the U.S. will have a greater reliance on allies in ensuring stability in the region. Current bilateral security agreements call for Korea, Australia, Japan, and the Philippines to contribute to the maintenance of peace and share in the burden of ensuring security in the event of regional conflicts. U.S. forces are stretched across the globe and involved in numerous operations.

The U.S. can no longer afford to permanently commit substantial U.S. forces to one theater. We need to continue to examine how our forces are based overseas. But we cannot simply disengage militarily; instead we must change the nature of our military presence in the region to reflect the post-Cold War strategic situation. Our military forces are not currently configured adequately to address our new security challenges. However, with careful strategic planning, we can restructure our forces and reduce troop strength in the Asia-Pacific region and continue to meet commitments and defend U.S. interests.

To address emerging new threats, we cannot rely exclusively on our military power. Special efforts to combat security threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and terrorism will require increasing cooperation between the U.S. and countries in the region. The U.S. must place increasing emphasis on the critical need for close consultation and coordination with its allies and partners in the region. The U.S. must seek ways to expand its access to and engagement with other countries. These efforts will rely on the continuation, to a lesser degree, of U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region. The U.S. ability to sustain access to critical regions will be a cornerstone of our effective twenty-first century strategy for Asia-Pacific region.

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ENDNOTES

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